

# AN ISLAND PEARL

BY B. L. FARJEON

INTERNATIONAL PRESS ASSOCIATION.

## CHAPTER XII.

HE appeal softened me, and, with a sudden impulse of remorse and pity, I took the old mother in my arms. With her head on my shoulder she sobbed her thanks, and continued her story, calmer now because of this little act of sympathy.

"Amos, my son, I was in the hospital for more than a year, and most of that time I was like a woman in a dream. I was told that for months I didn't know a soul about me, and it was never expected I should rise from my bed. But the Lord was good to me, and I got well slowly—oh, so slowly, Amos! For a long time I could not remember what had taken place, but little by little it came back to me. Then I was told that when I was taken to the hospital they did not know who I was, and that there was nothing in my pocket by which they could have found out my name. They suspected, they said, that I had sailors for my relations, for I talked a great deal about the sea; but that was all they could discover. No one came to see me all the time I was in the hospital, and when I was strong enough they let me go home. When I got back to the cottage I found a neighbor living in it, who thought that I was dead, as I believed you to be before to-night, my dear son. The neighbors had heard nothing of the accident, and they all believed me to be dead; and they came about me, now that I was risen from the grave, as it might be, and those who were hardest upon me before made it up to me in kindness. Then I heard that I had lost my son—that the ship he was in had foundered, and that not a soul in her had been saved. I heard more, my son—shall I tell it?"

"Tell it," I said, steeling my voice.

"Don't blame me, Amos, and bear it like a brave man, for my sake, dear. I asked after Mabel, and the first thing I heard was that she had a baby. 'Go and bring her,' I said to the neighbors who were about me—go and bring her and my son's child to me. Tell her I am living, and am yearning to embrace them both. They looked at one another, and gradually the story came out. Shortly after the news of the loss of the Blue Jacket with all hands reached the neighborhood, Mabel and her mother went away."

"Where to? Where is my wife and child?"

"They left England altogether, for Australia; and since then nothing has been heard of them."

Consolation at this startling news struck me dumb for a time, and my mother was too frightened to break the silence. This night, which in my eager anticipation was to have been filled with joy had brought desolation and despair to my heart.

"Have you anything more to say?" I asked faintly, when I could muster strength to speak. I had to repeat the question before my mother replied, and then the words fell like drops of poison from her lips.

"Amos, Mabel did not go alone."

"You have already told me so. Her mother and my child were with her. My child!" I stretched forth my arms in an agony of disappointment.

"Some one else was with her, my son."

"Who?"

"Mr. Druce, your enemy."

I shook her from me roughly, and stood upon the threshold of the room. The snow floated in, but I did not heed it. I heard my mother's step behind me.

"Stop where you are!" I cried, fiercely.

"Don't approach close to me, nor look into my face! You have hardened my heart toward you. It is for me to speak now, and for you to listen. You believe that my wife is unfaithful to me. You my mother, have said so to me—to my face. It is a lie! Do you hear me? It is a lie!"

My vehemence shook her to the soul.

"You made me speak," she faltered, "as though I were on my death-bed. I have obeyed you, my son—I have obeyed you. Oh, Amos, my heart is breaking!"

"And mine is filled with joy and happiness at what you have told me," I retorted. "A loving mother who has proved herself to me on this bitter Christmas night!"

"Amos, Amos!" she cried, in an agony of grief. "It is not my fault. I know what you must suffer. I would not dare to tell you what the neighbors said of her—"

"You would not dare," I said, "for I should not stop to hear. It needs no telling; you yourself have made me acquainted with the slanders their false tongues spoke respecting me. Well, you knew them to be liars, but you were willing enough to listen to them afterward, when their tune was changed. But what does it matter what a lot of gossiping, tittle-tattling women say about a man? He is strong to bear it, and can laugh at them for their pains. And you, well, you could defend me in my absence, but you could find no words in defense of her who is dearer to me than my life—than a hundred lives, if I had them! You hate her from the moment I spoke to you of my love for her. Why did you do so? You threw doubts then upon her goodness, as you have thrown doubts this night upon her purity. If you had done what you should

have done when Mabel returned home, if you had gone boldly into her house and spoken to her plainly, all this misery, all this torture, might have been avoided. But you had condemned her in your heart from the first, and were only too willing to believe all the bad things that were said of her. You, a woman who, for my sake, if not for her own, should have defended her, a young and inexperienced girl, from the malicious tongues of slanderers and liars, who were striking at my life and my happiness, sided with them against her, and had no word to speak in her defense.

"What could have been in Mabel's mind on that happy Christmas night, three years ago, to cause her to win from me a sacred pledge of trustfulness in her faith and love, I cannot with certainty say; but some shadow of fear was upon her. Perhaps she suspected you were not her friend; perhaps, with the knowledge that her own mother was against me, she dreaded that circumstances might occur in my absence to cause a breach between us, and she wished to strengthen both herself and me. Anyway, she drew the pledge from me, and she gave me hers, and I believe in her faithfulness with all my soul. 'The harder task of faithfulness is yours,' she said, as she kissed me; and she told me that while I was absent from her she would have three talismans with her—hope, faith and love. 'I should never doubt,' she said. 'My love for you and faith in you have become a part of my life.' Listen now to the words I spoke to her; they are graven on my heart: 'Henceforth this good season holds a more sacred place in my heart because it has brought me the priceless blessing of your love; because, also, of the lesson it has taught me, the lesson of faith, to live forever undimmed in my soul.' Well, whispering these words to her from my heart of hearts, shall I, on this anniversary of that happy night, bitter as it is to me, prove them, even by the shadow of suspicion, to be false? No, henceforth I have but one task before me. When that is done, and not till then, you and I, mother, shall meet again."

"What are you going to do, Amos?"

"I am going to act toward my wife and child as my father, Amos Beecroft, would have acted toward you and yours had you been slandered in his absence as my wife has been in mine. I will never put foot inside this cottage again until I find her; and when she is before you, and you are face to face, you shall ask her pardon, for the wrong you have done her."

"I ask her pardon now!" sobbed my mother. "I have been weak and wrong—I see it! I ought to have done as you said. No, no, Amos; do not leave me without a word of pity and forgiveness! As I kneel to you I will kneel to her, my son!" Her tears choked her utterance.

"God forgive you for what you have done!" I answered, not looking at the prostrate form at my feet, "and send comfort to us both. I go away tonight a crushed and desolate man, and there will henceforth be no light in my life till I have found my wife and child!"

Thus in the blindness of my grief I spoke, throwing, in my unreason, all the blame upon my old mother; and as I stepped out into the cold and wintry night, her mournful cry, "Oh, Amos, my son!" crept after me like a wailing wind. I knew that a ship was lying at Gravesend ready to sail for Australia, and for that I was bent. I trudged doggedly through the snow, halting but once, outside a house in which, notwithstanding the lateness of the night, merry-making was going on.

What caused me to pause was a woman's voice singing the very song my wife had sung on our wedding night:

"Though friends be chiding,  
And waves dividing,  
In faith abiding,  
I'll still be true;  
And I'll pray for thee,  
On the stormy ocean,  
In deep devotion,  
That's what I'll do."

The hot tears this reminiscence forced from me relieved me somewhat; but a gnawing pain was at my heart as I repeated the words "In faith abiding I'll still be true." The tone in which my mother had informed me that Mabel did not go away alone had haunted me from the moment the words were spoken, and I strove in vain to deaden the poisonous thoughts they engendered. The two themes, "in faith abiding, I'll still be true," and "Mr. Druce, your enemy, is with Mabel," came alternately to my mind, mocking each other and adding to my misery.

In two days I was again on the sea, on my way to Australia.

CHAPTER XIII.

TIRING scenes are now before me scenes which are woven in the history of my life, and which will lead me naturally to the end. But before they commence there is a blank, so far as concerns the proper business of my story.

A blank of six or seven years. I

have lost count of time; and to this day, although I have been tenderly and playfully assisted by one who is very, very dear to me, I cannot fix the exact number of years I was at the other end of the world. Being there, I had but one object before me, and in pursuance of it I traveled thousands of miles on foot. Wherever I heard of a woman and child who in any way resembled the description of those I was in search of, thither I directed my steps. This will not appear so strange to you who have not traveled in those regions, when I tell you that on the gold-diggings at that time there were fifty men to one woman; therefore, a woman could be more easily tracked than in a big city. Neither weather nor distance deterred me. I traveled through flood, and literally through fire; for I was in the Black Forest on that awful black Thursday when scores of miles of silver and iron bark trees were blazing fiercely. You may walk through the forest on this day, and follow the track of that terrible fire. Many a false track did I follow, only to be disappointed, after miles of weary wandering. Over and over again I was in Forest Creek, Tarrangower, Bendigo and Ballarat. In the last place I was a witness of the terrible riots, and took part in them, being compelled to do so to save my life. I went to every new rush—to Maryborough, Dunolly, Avoca—but never found those I was in search of. One time I followed a woman and child for six months, losing them whenever I reached the place I was bound for, and following them on to the next, where I lost them again.

I could fill a volume with my adventures during this time; but the telling of them would not forward my story. I must here record a certain change of feeling which came over me at about the expiration of a couple of years. The desire to find my wife became weakened; the desire to find my child became more and more intense. Soon I thought almost entirely of my child, and I pictured him in my imagination as growing up year after year, with fair hair and blue eyes, and with features resembling those of my father, Beecroft, Mariner. This change of feeling led to another impression as the years went by. I got it into my head that my wife might have died, but that my boy was certainly alive. Curiously enough, instead of becoming disheartened by my want of success, I never once lost my conviction that the day would come when I should hold him in my arms.

I had to work for my living, as you may guess, and I was generally fortunate in finding more gold than my necessities required. I was sober and steady; and I take some credit to myself that I was not wrecked, as hundreds of better men than I were, in sly grog-shops and public houses. Drink was the ruin of many a fair life on the gold-diggings and in the cities; but there was no temptation in it for me, and I escaped. I did not escape another temptation. I was bitten by the gold fever, and I had my dreams of finding a big nugget of gold, and the day afterward of finding those I was in search of, and then all of us going home and living happily together. I dreamed that dream often, and always regretted the waking up. One thing I pushed resolutely from my mind, and would not think of—that was, what I should do if I met Mr. Druce. When it got into my head unawares, I brooded over it until I came to myself, when I thrust it from me in fear, for there was always a mist of blood in my eyes as his image came before me.

## CAUGHT THE WHALE.

Three Hours of Hard Fighting Brought Victory to the Fishermen.

"There she blows!" That was the cry heard through Amagansett, L. I., a few mornings ago. The signal flag of red was run up and was quickly responded to by the crews belonging to the whaling boats along the shore between East Hampton and Amagansett, says the New York Journal. Lately whales have appeared in this vicinity, and numerous attempts have been made to catch one, but without success. Two were again sighted that morning opposite Amagansett and five boats were soon in hot pursuit. The whales were about one and a half miles off shore. After an exciting chase until noon one of the captains got close enough to the largest whale to harpoon him. He was opposite Napeague life-saving station when struck and the men soon had three lines attached to him. Then began an exciting battle between the men and the sea monster. Time and again the whale attempted to carry the men out on the ocean, and repeatedly the whalers would stab him with the harpoon. It was dangerous sport, and to the onlookers from the beach it seemed as though the boats would be wrecked every time the whale rose to the surface. He made savage lunges with his tail, lashing the water to a foam and spouting to a great height. After three hours' hard fighting the whale showed signs of weakening and began to spout blood in the air. At 4:30 o'clock the crew succeeded in landing the whale on the beach. He measured forty-five feet and will probably make forty barrels of oil. The captains expect to realize a very large sum for him. The unusual sight drew crowds to the beach from neighboring villages and the hotels and livery stables made preparations for a grand rush of visitors the next day.

## Moonshiners in Peace.

An unusual report came from Etowah county, Alabama, when the records of the United States marshal of that district for 1896 were made up. It appeared that not a moonshiner had been disturbed there during the year.

## A HOOSIER GENIUS.

MISS FURMAN OF EVANSVILLE HAS WON FAME.

The Authoress of "Stories of a Sanctified Town" Was a Genuine Rustic in Her Childhood Days—A Close Observer of Nature and Customs.

(Evansville, Ind., Letter.)

HE success of "Stories of a Sanctified Town" has brought many inquiries to this city as to the personality of its distinguished authoress. In a life so short as Miss Furman's, there are naturally few details to give to the public. She was born and brought up in an old and prominent South Carolina family, and her mother, Jessie Collins Furman, was a Kentucky girl, who was greatly admired for her beauty of person, and of character. When Miss Furman was but seven years old her mother died, and eight years later her father was taken. Both parents were intellectual, and the little girl inherited an unusually bright mind, which with her alert way of looking at things, and her original humor, was a guarantee that something out of the common might be expected of her.

Perhaps no one enters so intimately into the homes and hearts of people as their family physician, and nearly all doctors could, if they had the leisure and the literary inclination, tell true tales that would hold the mind imperatively. As a little girl, Miss Furman



LUCY F. FURMAN.

often rode with her father on his daily rounds of visits in town and country, and thus early acquired an insight into the lives of the people that has been in valuable to her. When in later years the singular experience of sanctification took complete possession of a certain little community in which she was interested, it was but natural that she should put pen to paper and tell about the ludicrous and the pathetic incidents that thrilled the simple hearts in the sanctified town. It was equally natural that so young a girl should be doubtful of her own powers.

At the suggestion of a friend, Miss Furman sent some of her stories to James Whitcomb Riley, whom she has never met. Surely no more cheering and helpful words were ever written in reply by a famous writer to one just beginning the hazardous path of authorship; and though Miss Furman has had many laudatory letters since her book appeared, there is not one of them that she cherishes as she does the first from Mr. Riley, bidding her godspeed.

The first stories she wrote were published by the Century Magazine. The Century Company issued her first and only volume, "Stories of a Sanctified Town."

Miss Furman has been for several years a resident of Evansville.

## Watch-Testing at Kew.

There has been watchmaking at Coventry as long as there has been a watch trade in England, which is for the last 200 years or thereabouts. There used to be three centers of the English trade, these being Liverpool, Coventry and London. Now there are practically but two, Coventry and Birmingham. The test of great discoveries in other directions while they were really seeking to solve the problem of the Niger. The only result of these investigations was a fresh crop of erroneous theories. One of them conjectured that the Niger reached the Atlantic, and each one had an opinion of his own. All these speculations were duly recorded on the maps, and the cartographic delineation of the Niger from 1791 to 1832 is something wonderful to contemplate. It would seem to be a simple matter to keep to the river, when once it was reached, and follow it to its destination; but that was the very thing the explorers were unable to do. But it was the German geographer Reichard, in his library at home, who solved the Niger riddle, some fifteen years before the Lander brothers in 1932 proved his assertion true. Everybody knew of the numerous little rivers emptying into the Gulf of Benin, and they were supposed to be independent streams of small importance. But Reichard said that the long stretch of coast where these streams reached the ocean was the sea front of a great delta, and that the Oil rivers were nothing but the subdivisions of the mighty Niger. That was true, and we know now that the Niger delta is the largest in Africa.

## One of New Zealand's Curious Birds.

A curious little bird is the weka, which is found in the Alpine region in the South Island of New Zealand. It is described by Mr. Arthur P. Harper, B. A., in an account of his explorations, just published. The weka, as

soon as he sees your camp pitched, takes possession of it. He neither respects nor fears man, and is an incorrigible thief. He eats anything from a cartridge to a member of his own family—for he is a cannibal. "I remember one instance of this," writes our author, "when our dog unfortunately killed a young bird before we could prevent it, which was too small to eat. The parents made a decent show of grief over their loss, and then, being quite sure that the little one was dead, they proceeded to eat its still warm remains." The weka fights all comers for undisturbed possession of the camp he has annexed. His histrionic talent is great, and he can sham death to perfection. But for the fact that he is a first rate scavenger, he would, to his human host, be an intolerable nuisance. After some weeks of tenderness and self-sacrifice, the weka all at once becomes a brutal husband and father. That is when the youngsters have grown up, and, as he thinks, are able to forage for themselves; still, he is unnecessarily harsh, not to say shamelessly selfish. If his place of sojourn be rich in food, he banishes his wife and children; if it be not, he treks elsewhere. The egotistic it lasts until next he becomes a father, and then altruism is hardly the word for his self-renunciation. Let Mr. Harper describe him and his wife: "The parent birds while rearing their young hardly eat anything themselves and grow as poor as a church mouse, everything they find is carried to the youngsters. When a pair has only one chick it is very ludicrous to see them rushing up to it and jostling one another in their eagerness to give it a piece of bacon or bread, and sometimes asking it to try a piece of a jam tin, or tempting it with a choice copper cartridge-case." The weka would appear to be "as good a camp companion as one could wish for, with his tameness, impudence and almost human power of expression. He is a bird with small, unformed wings, unable to fly, and varying in size from a partridge to a pheasant."

## KENTUCKY BEAUTY HONORED.

Miss Castleman Paid Proud Tribute by Well Society. (Special Letter.)

Miss Alice Castleman of Louisville, Ky., is accorded the distinction of being one of the prettiest society women in America. At the grand charity ball in New York city a week or two ago, John Jacob Astor, to whom fell the honor of selecting the belle of the night placed the crown on Miss Castleman's head. The beautiful Miss Castleman, to whom this honor was entirely unexpected and far from welcome, was so confused by the notoriety into which the Astor's artistic approval immediately brought her that she left the city and returned to her southern home, in the suburbs of Louisville. Miss Castleman's mother was a Miss Alice Barbee. On her mother's side Mrs. Castleman was descended from several distinguished Irish and English families. She was the daughter of the Hon. John Barbee, who was the mayor of Louisville in the palmy days of 1854 and 1855. The Hon. John Barbee was the grandson of Elias Barbee, one of the pioneers of the young state. He with his five brothers and his father, enlisted in a Virginia regiment of the Revolutionary army. Upon the close of the war, father and sons, still united, went to Kentucky. Tall, straight as an arrow, General Castleman, the father of this queen of women, was a famous figure all through the stormy days of the 60's, when he rode as a major in the wake of Morgan; Alice Castleman is a girl of nineteen summers, with oval face, broad brow, violet eyes, waving chestnut hair, Grecian nose, a mouth denoting determination, a perfect chin, divinely dimpled, standing five feet eight inches, a creature of beauty, grace and symmetry. Miss Castleman is a good dancer, an accomplished musician, plays tennis and golf equally well, and is a fearless rider and driver. She never appears to better



MISS ALICE CASTLEMAN.

advantage than when in the saddle. She is one of the dashing members of the riding club and is familiar with the pedigree of all blooded stock the world over.

## Footgear in Foreign Lands.

The Portuguese shoe has a wooden sole and heel, with a ramp made of patent leather, fanciful, showing the flesh side of the skin. The Persian footgear is a raised shoe, and is often a foot high; it is made of light wood, richly inlaid, with a strap extending over the instep. The Muscovite shoe is hand-woven on a wooden frame, and but little attention is paid to the shape of the foot; leather is sometimes used, but the sandal is generally made of silk cordage and woolen cloth. The Siamese shoe has the form of an ancient canoe, with a gondola bow and an open toe; the sole is made of wood, the upper of inlaid wood and cloth, and the exterior is elaborately ornamented in colors with gold and silver.

There are 232 convents in Great Britain.

## Peruvian Bitters.

LAFAYETTE, IND., August 6, 1896. I have been using your Peruvian Bitters of late for malarial fever that I have not been entirely rid of for the past two years until now. I must say your Bitters beat everything. I used it only six weeks and began to improve the first week. I am now well and hearty and feel young again, even now in this very hot weather.

MRS. JANE NEWMAN.

A New York dealer in men's furnishing goods displays a sign reading: "Shirt Constructor." Don't look for much growth in grace as long as you keep your hands in your pockets.

The Climax Brandy of 1876 Vintage. Has proven to be a superior distillation, and with years of ripening is now put upon the market by the Speer N. & Wine Co. It is a superior mellow brandy, possessing all the medicinal properties for which brandies from grape are so eminently useful. Sold by druggists.

## Told His Own Death Knell.

James Clark, janitor of the Sixth ward school in La Crosse, Wis., committed suicide at midnight Monday night. He climbed into the belfry of the school house, fastened the bell rope around his neck, and then swung off. The bell rang twice, tolling his own death knell. Clark was a man 55 years old.

## EVIL.

Evil under the cover of betinseled gauze is more insinuating and demoralizing than when it flaunts its uncensored nakedness.—Rev. J. D. Stanley.

## Impure Blood

"My blood was out of order, and I began taking Hood's Sarsaparilla. It has purified my blood and relieved me of rheumatism, kidney trouble and sick headaches. I am now able to do a good day's work. Rheumatism has troubled me since I was a child, but I am now entirely well."—Miss FROBER BAILEY, Box 443, Pasadena, California.

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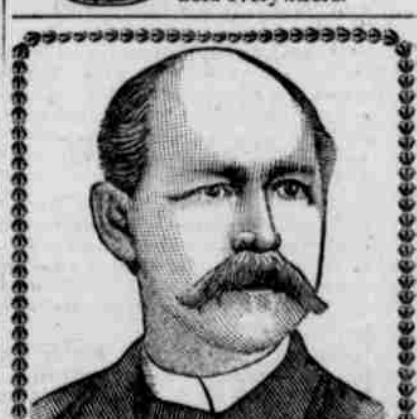
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